



Testimony in Support of Texas House Bill 229
Senate State Affairs Committee
Amie Ichikawa
May 15, 2025

Dear Members of the Senate State Affairs Committee,

My name is Amie Ichikawa. I am an ambassador for Independent Women and the founder of Woman II Woman, a support group for incarcerated women, and I urge you to support HB 229.

I served nearly five years in the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, one of the largest women's prisons in the country. During that time, I personally experienced how vital it is to have single-sex spaces for the safety, privacy, and rehabilitation of incarcerated women. When California passed Senate Bill 132—the so-called “Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act”—in 2020, it allowed male inmates to transfer into women's prisons, even if they had not undergone any “gender-affirming” treatment. I began receiving desperate calls, letters, and emails from women still in prison, begging for help as men were being placed in their cells and their lives were turned upside down.

Women in prison already live in conditions where privacy is almost nonexistent. Now, they are being forced to share small, overcrowded spaces with men, including those with violent criminal histories and no intention of transitioning. These are not hypothetical concerns. I know of a male inmate who was isolated in a men's prison for assaulting his bunkmates but was transferred directly into a women's general population cell with seven women.

HB 229 would preserve the legal existence of women, as distinct from men.

This bill does so in three ways. First, it clarifies the long-standing meaning of sex-based words like ‘woman,’ and ‘female,’ already used in 131 Texas state statutes. Second, it provides legal protection to defend women's single-sex spaces, such as locker rooms, rape crisis centers, dormitories, and prisons. Lastly, it protects the integrity of sex-based data collection.

HB 229 reflects recent action on the federal level that restores biological reality and protects sex-based rights by recognizing that there are only two

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sexes, male and female. Recent action on the federal level safeguarding women's rights is encouraging, but is not enough to ensure the rights of women and girls in Texas are upheld. The Texas Legislature must pass HB 229 to ensure these rights are fully safeguarded.

House Bill 229 codifies the original meaning of basic sex-based words like "female" and "male" in order to ensure that women's rights aren't compromised. It articulates Texas' important interest in offering single-sex spaces to advance equal opportunity, privacy, safety, and fairness. It will give meaning to common words so that Texas courts have clarity when interpreting laws that already exist, something we wish wasn't necessary but has proven to be crucial to ensuring women don't lose their sex-based rights.

Without clear definitions, policies that prioritize ideology over reality will continue to endanger the safety, privacy, and rights of women. This bill also helps protect single-sex spaces, which are critical for the dignity and well-being of women in prisons, shelters, sports, and other settings.

We all want to ensure the rights of all are protected, but when men invade women's spaces, like prisons, women are disproportionately harmed and their rights are discarded in the name of inclusion. You can be both for equality and single-sex spaces.

Similar legislation has received bipartisan support across the United States. Recent national polling has shown that 86% of American Voters agree, women and men are legally equal, but they are not biologically the same. 91% of American Voters agree, when it comes to prisons there are important reasons to separate the sexes.

This issue is deeply personal for me. I know what it's like to live in a cell where privacy is a luxury and safety is a constant concern. I know the fear of being unable to escape, of not being listened to when you ask for help. But I also know the importance of standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

In summary, HB 229 does an excellent job to define male and female terms and protect women's private spaces. It does not create any special rights for women nor does it take rights away from others. It simply safeguards

women's existing legal right to have single-sex spaces to ensure privacy and safety. This bill is a sharp rebuke to the efforts to legally eradicate the difference between the sexes and fundamentally erase women by depriving them of their dignity, safety, and well-being. Men and women are biologically different and as such have a legal right to single-sex spaces.

I urge this committee to pass HB 229 to protect women's rights and help restore fairness, safety, and dignity to spaces where women are most vulnerable.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Amie Ichikawa
Ambassador
Independent Women